

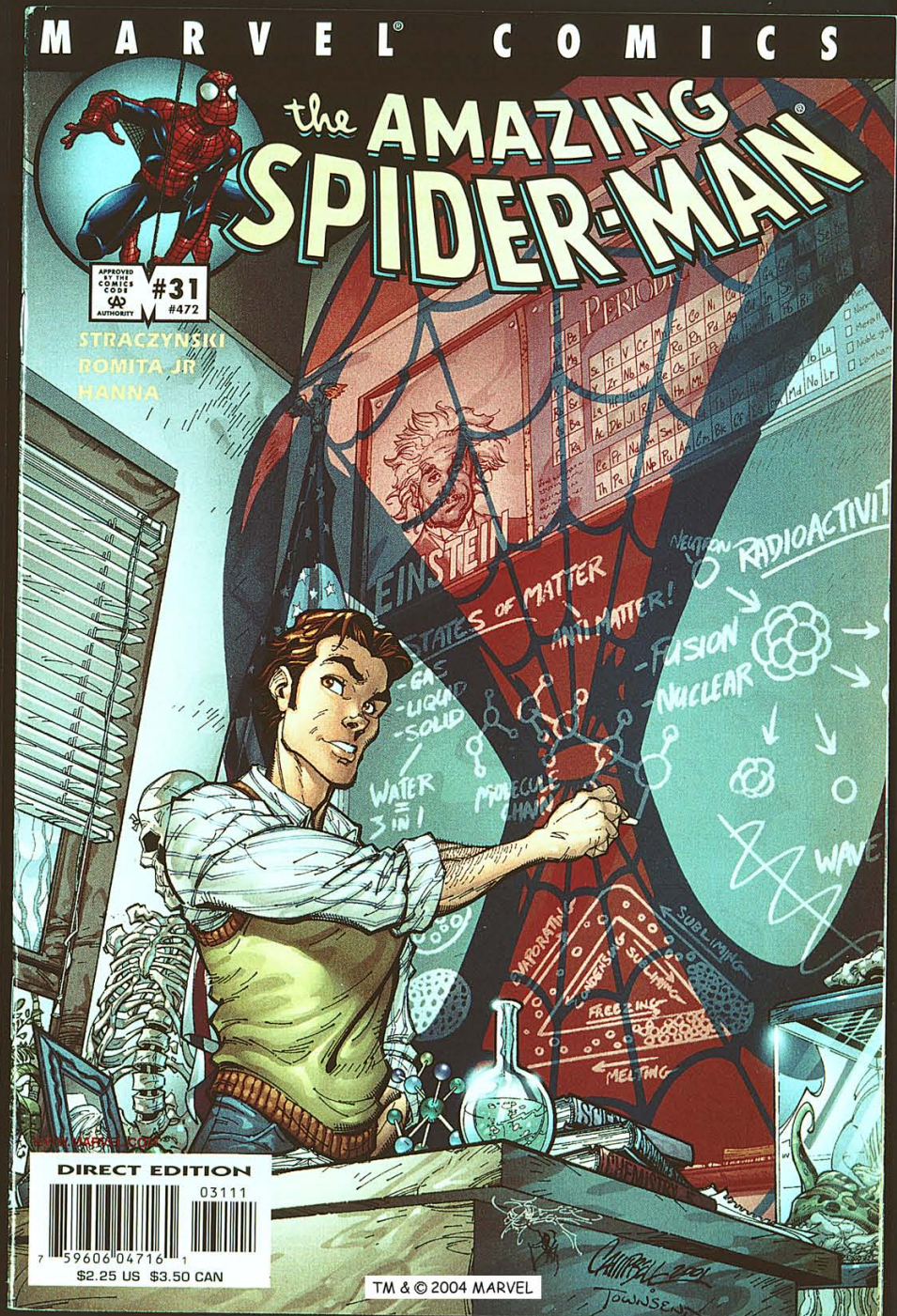
MARVEL COMICS

# the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

APPROVED  
BY THE  
COMICS  
CODE  
AUTHORITY

#31  
#472

STRACZYNSKI  
ROMITA JR  
HANNA



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Milk  
mustaches  
don't  
last long  
when you're  
a sponge.



Which means  
I may have  
to drink  
another glass  
of yummy  
chocolate  
milk.

Or two.

Or three.

Or four.



CHOCOLATE  
got milk?

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"I KNOW WHAT  
YOU'RE THINKING.  
AM I A FRIEND,  
OR AN ENEMY?"



MY NAME  
IS EZEKIEL, AND I  
HAVE A QUESTION  
FOR YOU.



"THIS IS THE FIVE  
MILLION DOLLAR  
QUESTION. I'M  
ABOUT TO YANK  
YOUR CHAIN LIKE  
NOBODY ELSE EVER  
HAS BEFORE, AND  
NOBODY EVER  
WILL AGAIN. SO  
LISTEN CAREFULLY."

WOULD YOU  
LIKE ANOTHER  
EGG, PETER?



DID THE  
RADIATION  
ENABLE THE  
SPIDER TO GIVE  
YOU THESE  
POWERS?



"OR WAS THE SPIDER TRYING  
TO GIVE YOU THOSE POWERS  
BEFORE THE RADIATION KILLED IT?"

I SAID  
WOULD YOU LIKE  
ANOTHER EGG,  
PETER?

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HMM? OH...  
UHM...SORRY,  
AUNT MAY, I  
WAS --

-- A THOUSAND MILES AWAY,  
YES, I COULD TELL. I'VE SEEN  
THAT FARAWAY LOOK IN YOUR  
EYES SINCE YOU WERE THREE  
AND TRYING TO DECIDE WHETHER  
OR NOT CATS COULD FLY IF  
GIVEN SUFFICIENT INCENTIVE  
AND A HEAD START OFF  
THE ROOF.



WHEN THAT HAPPENS, I WAIT,  
AND REPEAT, JUST LIKE IT  
SAYS ON THOSE SHAMPOO  
BOTTLES, "WASH AND REPEAT."  
EXCEPT THERE'S NO WATER  
INVOLVED. EVENTUALLY, YOU  
COME BACK. YOU ALWAYS DO.  
IT'S JUST SOMETHING I'VE  
GOTTEN USED TO.

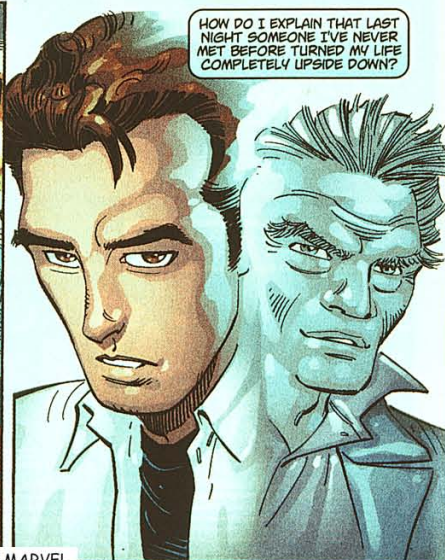
SO: PETER, LAST  
EGG. LAST EGG.  
PETER, WOULD YOU  
TWO LIKE TO GET  
TOGETHER?

YES,  
MAYAM.



SO ARE YOU GOING  
TO TELL ME WHAT'S GOT  
YOU SO DISTRACTED THIS  
MORNING? OR SHOULD I  
START CHECKING THE  
ROOF FOR MRS.  
BAILEY'S CAT?

IT'S...



HOW DO I EXPLAIN THAT LAST  
NIGHT SOMEONE I'VE NEVER  
MET BEFORE TURNED MY LIFE  
COMPLETELY UPSIDE DOWN?



SOMEBODY WITH POWERS  
VERY CLOSE TO MY OWN.

WHO SEEMS TO KNOW MORE  
ABOUT THE SOURCE OF MY  
POWER THAN I DO, AND  
WHO KNOWS MY REAL NAME.

TAKE  
CARE OF  
YOURSELF,  
P. I'LL BE IN  
TOUCH.



HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN?  
YOU DON'T. YOU JUST  
LIE. THE SAME WAY YOU'VE  
LIED FOR YEARS NOW.  
YOU LIE TO THE WOMAN  
WHO RAISED YOU AND  
MEANS MORE TO YOU  
THAN YOUR OWN LIFE.

IT SUCKS. I HATE IT.  
BUT IT'S NECESSARY.

...I WENT  
BY MY OLD  
HIGH SCHOOL  
THE OTHER  
DAY.

AH, NOSTALGIA. I SHOULD'VE  
RECOGNIZED THE LOOK. I  
SPEND QUITE A BIT OF TIME  
THERE MYSELF. HOW DID  
IT FEEL TO BE BACK?



WEIRD.  
IN SOME WAYS  
THAT SCHOOL WAS  
THE WORST PART OF  
MY LIFE. IN OTHERS,  
IT WAS THE BEST.  
BECAUSE THAT'S WHEN  
THINGS CHANGED  
FOR ME...

I MEAN, I CAUGHT  
SOME BREAKS, GOT BIT BY  
THE...SCIENCE BUG, STARTED  
SELLING MY PHOTOS TO THE  
BUGLE...THE SCHOOL WAS A REAL  
CHANCE FOR ME TO COME  
INTO MY OWN.

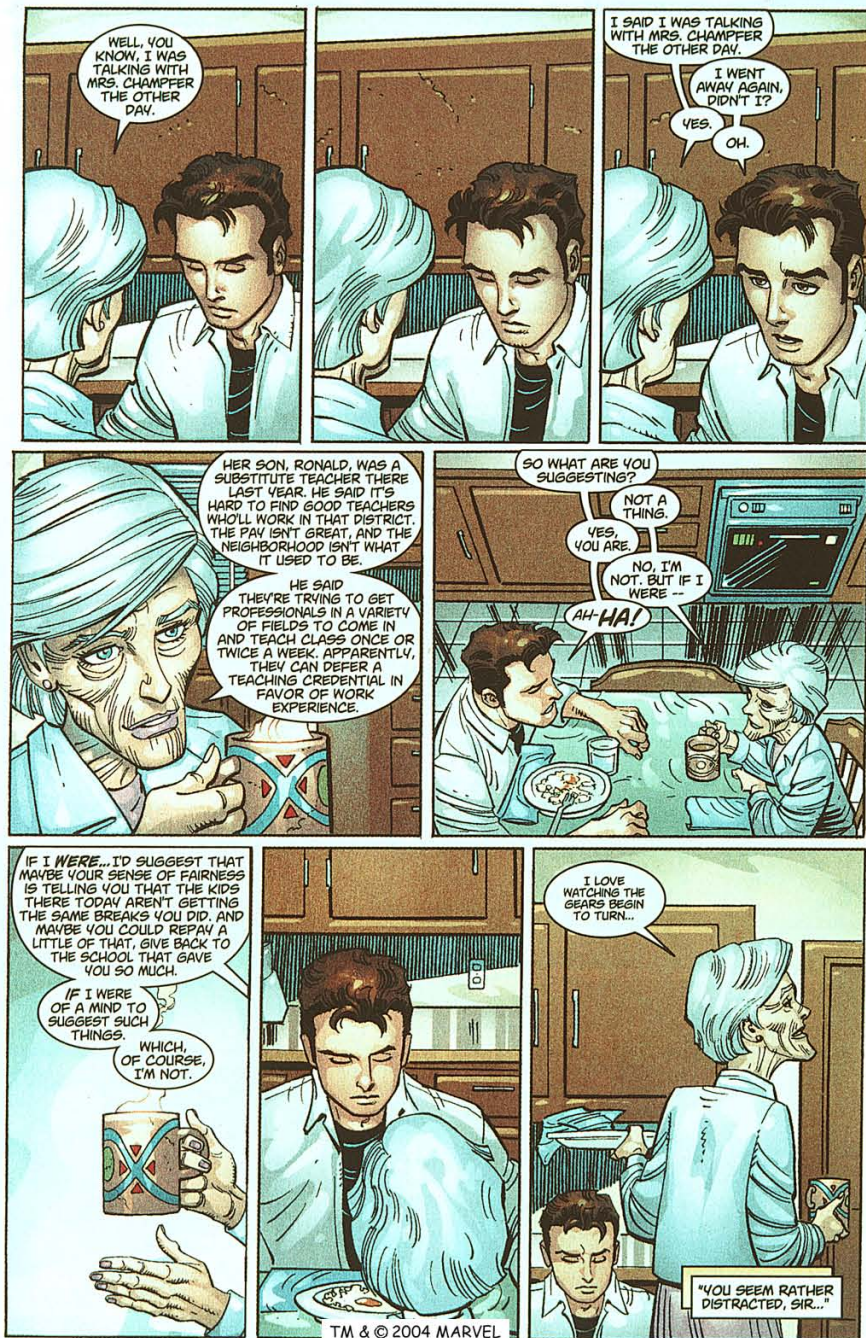
AND NOW...?



NOW...  
IT'S KIND OF  
FALLEN ON HARD  
TIMES. FRAYING AT THE  
EDGES, COVERED IN  
GRAFFITI...I GET THE  
FEELING THAT NOW IT'S  
AN EVEN TOUGHER  
PLACE FOR KIDS WHO  
ARE...WELL, LIKE I  
WAS AT THAT  
AGE.

BRIGHT? ALONE.  
GIFTED?





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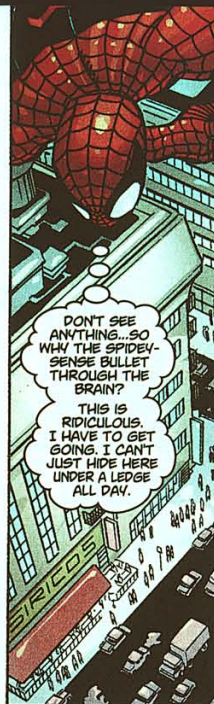
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OHJEEZ --!



DON'T SEE ANYTHING...SO WHY THE SPIDEV-SENSE BULLET THROUGH THE BRAIN?

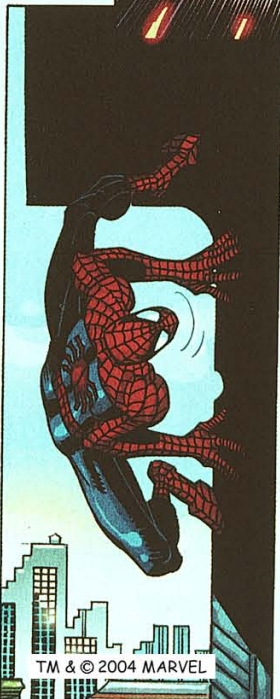
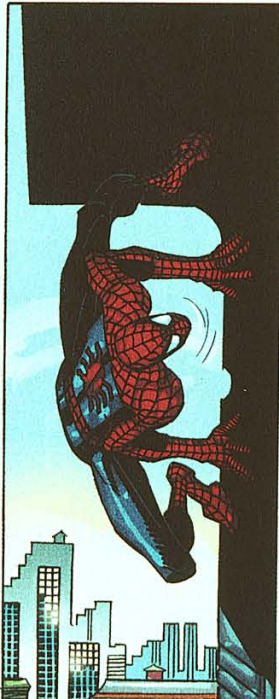
THIS IS RIDICULOUS. I HAVE TO GET GOING. I CAN'T JUST HIDE HERE UNDER A LEDGE ALL DAY.



I'LL JUST... SHOOT A WEB AND LEAP OUT THERE AND GET GOING ON MY WAY. I'LL JUST...



SLIP AROUND THIS WAY.



WHAT THE HECK WAS THAT? SPIDER-SENSE WENT NUTS, LIKE NOTHING I'VE EVER FELT BEFORE.

LIKE THE WORD HIDE WAS BURNED ACROSS MY BRAIN IN LETTERS TEN FEET HIGH.



CAREFULLY DECORATED. FRAGILE. LOVELY. DOOMED.

SAD, REALLY, BUT THEN IT'S ALWAYS SAD. ALWAYS HAS BEEN, ALWAYS WILL BE. IT'S YOUR LOT, YOU KNOW, TO BE THINGS OF BEAUTY, HERE FOR A MOMENT, A FLICKER, AND GONE. SO SAD...



HOW WAS THE CROISSANT?

FINE.

GOOD.

KILL ME.

NOT TODAY.

SOON, THOUGH?

WE'LL SEE...



...NOW DRINK YOUR COFFEE. IT'S AN ORANGE MOCHA. BEFORE IT GETS COLD.

"ICK! SPIDER! GET IT!"





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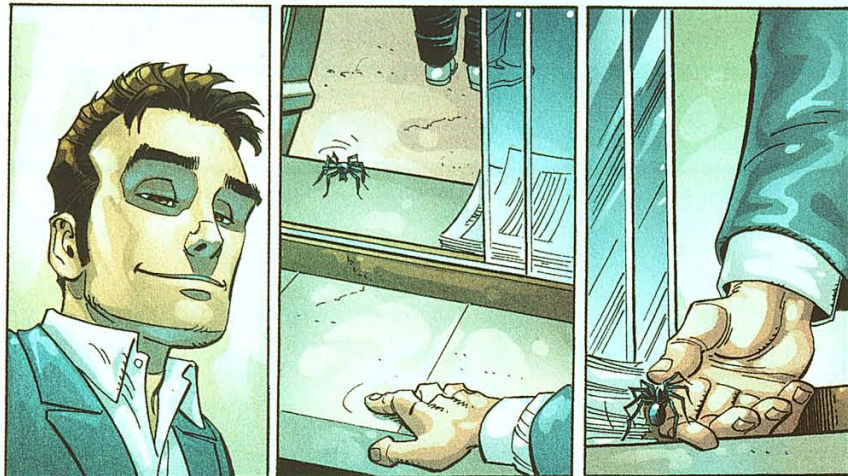
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BITE  
AN  
OCTOPUS?**

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GOT YOU!



THEY'RE SCARED. THEY THINK THEY'RE GOING TO DIE.



IT'S NOT RIGHT. KIDS SHOULDN'T HAVE TO COME TO SCHOOL THINKING THEY'RE GOING TO DIE.



I WON'T HAVE IT.



I... I DON'T HEAR ANY MORE SHOTS. MAYBE... MAYBE HE'S STOPPED. MAYBE HE'S GONE AWAY.



NO, HE'S INSIDE.



WHAT... WHAT'RE WE GONNA DO?

SHUT UP! YOU WANNA LET HIM KNOW WE'RE HERE, STUPID? BESIDES, YOU CAN'T DO SQUAT, YOU CREEP, SO YOU MAY AS WELL JUST SHUT UP.



I REMEMBER HIM FROM THE LAST TIME I WAS HERE. JOEV?

YEAH, THAT WAS IT... JOEV. THEY WERE TAKING HIM DOWN PRETTY BAD.



AND I THINK... MAYBE, JUST MAYBE, I CAN SAVE MORE THAN JUST LIVES HERE.



YOU'RE JOEV, RIGHT?

UH-HUH...

YOU PRETTY GOOD AT CHEMISTRY?

UH-HUH...

WHAT'RE YOU --



I'M NOT TALKING TO YOU.

LISTEN TO ME CLOSELY, JOEV... I DON'T KNOW IF HE'S RELOADING OR LOOKING FOR SOME TARGET IN PARTICULAR, BUT EITHER WAY WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME.

LOOK BEHIND YOU.



I'M THINKING HE CAN'T HIT WHAT HE CAN'T SEE. WHAT DO YOU THINK?





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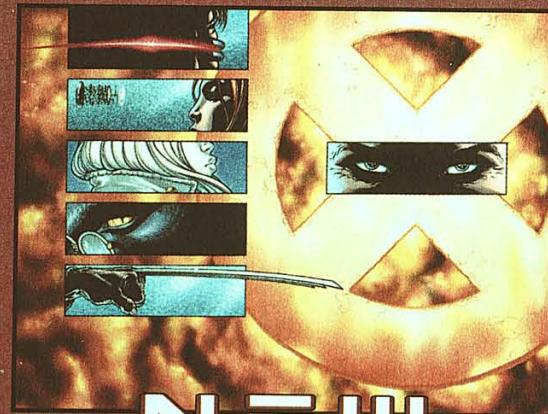
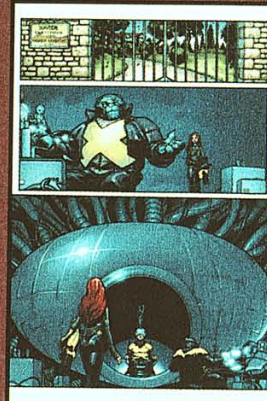
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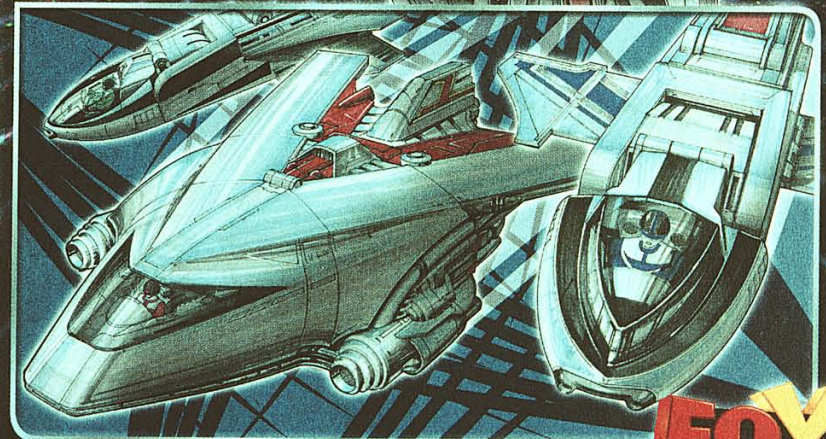




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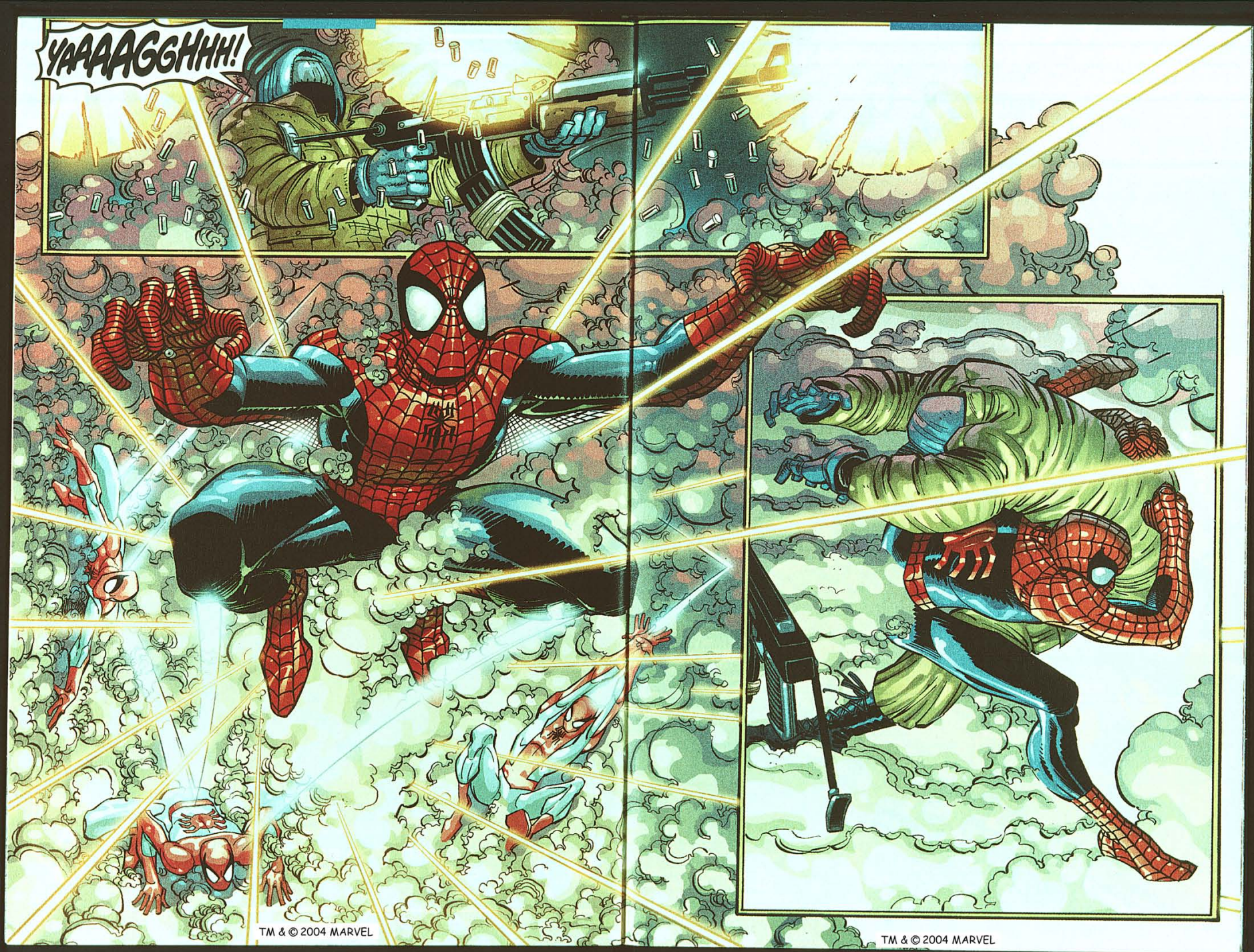
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YAAAAGGHHH!







THE KID JUST  
SNAPPED.

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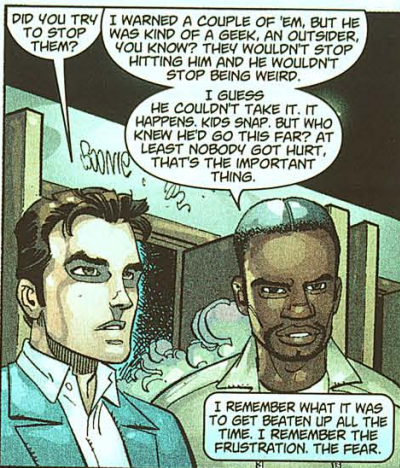
**MARVEL**





I HAD HIM IN ONE OF MY CLASSES. A REAL SMART KID. AN 'S STUDENT. THEY SAID HE WAS A PRODIGY OR SOMETHING.

THE OTHER KIDS WERE PRETTY BRUTAL TO HIM. PICKED ON HIM FOR ALL THREE YEARS. BUT Y'KNOW, YOU HAVE TO STAND UP ON YOUR OWN SOMETIMES.



DID YOU TRY TO STOP THEM?

I WARNED A COUPLE OF 'EM, BUT HE WAS KIND OF A GEEK, AN OUTSIDER. YOU KNOW? THEY WOULDN'T STOP HITTING HIM AND HE WOULDN'T STOP BEING WEIRD.

I GUESS HE COULDN'T TAKE IT. IT HAPPENS. KIDS SNAP. BUT WHO KNEW HE'D GO THIS FAR? AT LEAST NOBODY GOT HURT, THAT'S THE IMPORTANT THING.

I REMEMBER WHAT IT WAS TO GET BEATEN UP ALL THE TIME. I REMEMBER THE FRUSTRATION. THE FEAR.



THE RAGE. THE MINDLESS RAGE THAT MAKES YOU FEEL YOU'D DO ANYTHING TO GET BACK AT THE ONES WHO BRING YOU PAIN FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN THEY THINK IT'S FUN.

THAT COULD HAVE BEEN ME. THAT COULD BE JOEY SOMEDAY.



I HEAR YOU HELPED SAVE SOME OF THE KIDS. GOOD FOR YOU.

AND YOU?

I WAS BACK BY THE RACQUETBALL COURT. FIGURED THE BEST THING I COULD DO WAS TO KEEP MY HEAD DOWN AND LET THE RIGHT PEOPLE DO THEIR JOB.



YEAH, WELL... THEY DID. THEY DID THAT INDEED.

I QUIT... THAT'S IT. I'VE HAD IT. THIS PLACE IS A FREAKIN' JUNGLE. I'M OUTTA HERE!



I DON'T BLAME HIM. SCIENCE IS WASTED ON MOST OF THESE KIDS ANYWAY. A LOT OF 'EM ARE GOING NOWHERE FAST.

YEP. HE'S NOT THE FIRST ONE TO GET OUT OF HERE. WON'T BE THE LAST, EITHER.

WE ALL HAVE TO FACE THE TRUTH. YOU DO WHAT YOU CAN. BUT YOU CAN'T SAVE ALL OF THEM.



SO, ANYWAY, I DIDN'T GET YOUR NAME.

WHO AM I?



MY NAME'S PETER PARKER.

I'M THE NEW SCIENCE TEACHER.

COMING HOME

J. MICHAEL STRACZYNSKI writer JOHN ROMITA jr. penciler SCOTT HANNA inker DAN KEMP & AVALON STUDIOS colors Richard Starkings & COMICRAFT's Wes Abbott letters JOHN MIESEGAES ass'ted. AXEL ALONSO editor JOE QUESADA editor in chief BILL JEMAS president



# THE SPIDER'S WEB

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JOHN  
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CHIEF



Well, folks, here are a few of the letters we received about AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #29 and THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL 2001, the ill-fated reunion of Peter and Mary Jane. Opinions were divided, to say the least.

Dear Crew:

At least you let her go with dignity. MJ will be missed, but she leaves us wanting more as she goes. And Howard Mackie can leave AMAZING SPIDER-MAN knowing that, in the end, he did what was right. There was real heartbreak in this story and even some sense of rebirth for Peter and Mary Jane. The future is truly wide open for them both. My one concern is that this issue will be swept under the rug as sometimes these things are. There are real life consequences that Peter and those close to him must deal with as a result of MJ's departure. What must Aunt May and Anna think of this? What will everyone who knew the Parkers think? Questions like these must be answered.

Since this story played out in the only way it possibly could have, I am totally content to let MJ go and begin a new chapter with Peter Parker. I know you will get a lot of mail from those who rail against this story who consider themselves "die-hard" Spider-Man purists, but take it from someone who has followed Peter since he was five, this was the right thing to do and it had to be done. Thanks for handling it with care and attention.

Ronnie Dingman  
Louisville, KY

Thanks, Ronnie. While most readers wanted MJ back, not everyone shares your enthusiasm for the direction life has taken her. Take our next reader, for instance.

Hey,

What's going on? I can't believe that you guys are doing this to Peter. First, you kill off his wife, and then torment him to death with the thought that she's still alive somewhere, then give her back. And then, she doesn't even last one issue — you have her taking off because she can't handle him being the webslinger anymore! And neither of them shed a tear!

You can't do this to him. You can't do this to me! I've been following Spidey for years, and I'll admit I was wrong when I thought he should have hooked up with the Black Cat, because you showed me the error of my ways with MJ and her love for Peter. But now, you've trashed it. She says she really does love Peter, but she can't stay! What? She was gone, assumed dead, and when she gets rescued, she doesn't want to be with her husband, her rescuer, the love of her life? Obviously, she needs help. And then Peter just lets her leave and doesn't shed a tear? I believe in keeping it interesting, but this is too much. I sincerely hope that the other readers are speaking out and showing you the error of your ways. Peter and MJ belong together. Now that we know she is alive, let them be together.

Steve O'Rand  
Via Internet

A lot of folks agreed with you, Steve. Then again, a lot didn't. Clearly life has thrown Peter and MJ's relationship a potentially knockout punch. Only the future will show if they can get up off the mat.

Dear Spider-Man,

Just dropping a note to say how pleased I was with the outcome of AMAZING SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL 2001. As I stated in a letter printed in ASM #23, the separation of Peter and MJ is the right move.

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Hopefully, the new writers will continue this progression in the future and have them divorce. Before anyone wants to crucify me, let me explain. I love Mary Jane too she is one of the all-time great supporting characters and she will be missed. But sexual tension between Pete/Spidey and his female friends has been missing for far too long. This is part of what makes Spidey unique, and the chance to restore the status quo is here. Take advantage of it. Besides, MJ could still make guest appearances.

Terence Connors P.M.M.  
Rochelle Park, NJ

Well, Terence, there were a few people who wanted things to go this route, too. Certainly no one celebrates the idea of Peter and MJ divorcing, but there were a few readers who thought that this was the most realistic option for our couple. Let's hope it hasn't gotten to that point.

Spider-Man creators:

Pat yourself on the back for a job well done, Howard. Mary Jane is a great supporting character, and I am quite glad that she's back. I think that most fans will be happy with this decision; those like me who wanted MJ back have her back, and though the couple are not divorced (it wouldn't be consistent with Peter and MJ's personalities), they're separated but still care about each other and have a chance at getting back together. Bottom line: Peter finally has a great weight lifted off his shoulders, and I can't wait to see how — and if — JMS continues with this story.

Elijah Barga  
Forest Grove, OR

Thanks, Elijah. Our next letter writer agrees.

Dear Crew,

Well done! I expected MJ and Peter to have a fairy tale ending. I didn't expect them to go their own ways. But that's the great thing about comics — they keep you guessing!

Chris Hudson  
Vancouver, WA

Chris, thanks for rolling with the punches. And stay tuned.

Dear Spider-crew,

The AMAZING SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL 2001 was a fine way of sending off Howard Mackie as writer of the Spider titles, but it was also a bittersweet ending. Howard has taken a lot of hits over the past few years about the directions he's taken the Spider-Man titles in, so I'm glad he decided to end his run by concentrating on perhaps the two most important characters — Peter and Mary Jane. I had a feeling things would not go back to the status quo after Mary Jane returned. I guess Peter and Mary both knew it would happen in a way, as they mentioned before parting. This ending saddened me, as I, and many others, have been in similar situations where relationships don't work out. I suppose Peter will push on as always, but things will not be the same, and I suppose that's the point, isn't it?

Scott Brees  
Toronto, Canada

Right you are, Scott. And you weren't the only one who related to the ending of the Annual. It struck a chord with a lot of folks. In life, love doesn't always conquer all obstacles. In this comic, we'll have to wait and see.

Hello Team,

In the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #28 letter column, young "Mamoon" innocently

asks a question that is actually central to the MJ problem: "How can you be a super hero and be a married man at the same time?"

Mamoon's dilemma has more to do with denying the unlimited "chick-magnet" potential, but the real problem lies in duty to society/community vs. duty to spouse/family. And I imagine every Spidey writer has felt the looming presence of this 300-pound gorilla since "The Wedding" 10 those many years ago.

Most of us, I imagine, read Spider-Man for the very same reasons he was created: he's an engaging, unusual, charismatic costumed crime-fighter whose non-super hero life is as imperfect and mundane as anyone else's. From the start, we've been deeply involved in his civilian struggles, and that surely is why we've always cared so much about him. Not only is it his rather abstract "struggle against evil for the good of mankind" that we admire, but also his ability to fight while suffering from the flu, wearing an itchy costume, trying to keep his friends from making life-altering mistakes, avoiding unpleasant neighbors/bosses/old girlfriends, keeping appointments while unavoidably delayed — all things which we can deeply relate to on a personal level. And, of course, we want Peter to succeed in both arenas. And, by marrying MJ, he really did succeed in the personal arena.

For writers of Spider-Man there has emerged an unsolvable dilemma. We, the readers, want several things: (1) We want Spidey, the Super Hero. (2) We will only accept Peter Parker as Spidey, and (3) We want Peter to be a great, loving, responsible husband and role model.

I certainly wouldn't know what to do with these parameters if I were writing the book. As a fan, I myself want to see all of this work out somehow, but I can't begin to guess how it could be done and still remain true to the characters and/or make dramatic sense. Peter's greatest power has become the ability to shape an entire human being — and that's now where his responsibility lies.

Okay, this has turned into a hugely long letter, and if you do read this far, you have my undying gratitude.

Tom Howley  
Beltsville, MD

Tom, you've crystallized the debate over what path Peter Parker's life should travel — that of the down-on-his-luck bachelor, or that of the responsible family man. Some readers believe the former; some believe the latter. Only one group could get their wish.

It all boils down to a decision made by Mary Jane. Returned to her husband after a period of captivity and self-reflection, MJ has come to the conclusion that she can't fit Peter back into her life as easily as many of us had hoped. Does this make her a flawed character? Possibly. Does this make her a real character? Definitely. The pathos is that MJ really does love Peter, but doesn't know how to live with him — an unfortunate but all-too-real dynamic of life that more than a few readers related to.

Just remember, Peter and Mary Jane's current separation is an outgrowth of a choice made by Mary Jane — not Peter. It is a choice that Peter must come to terms with. What MJ's decision signals for the ultimate fate of the couple remains to be seen. Mary Jane has walked off into the sunset. The question is, is she gone for good?

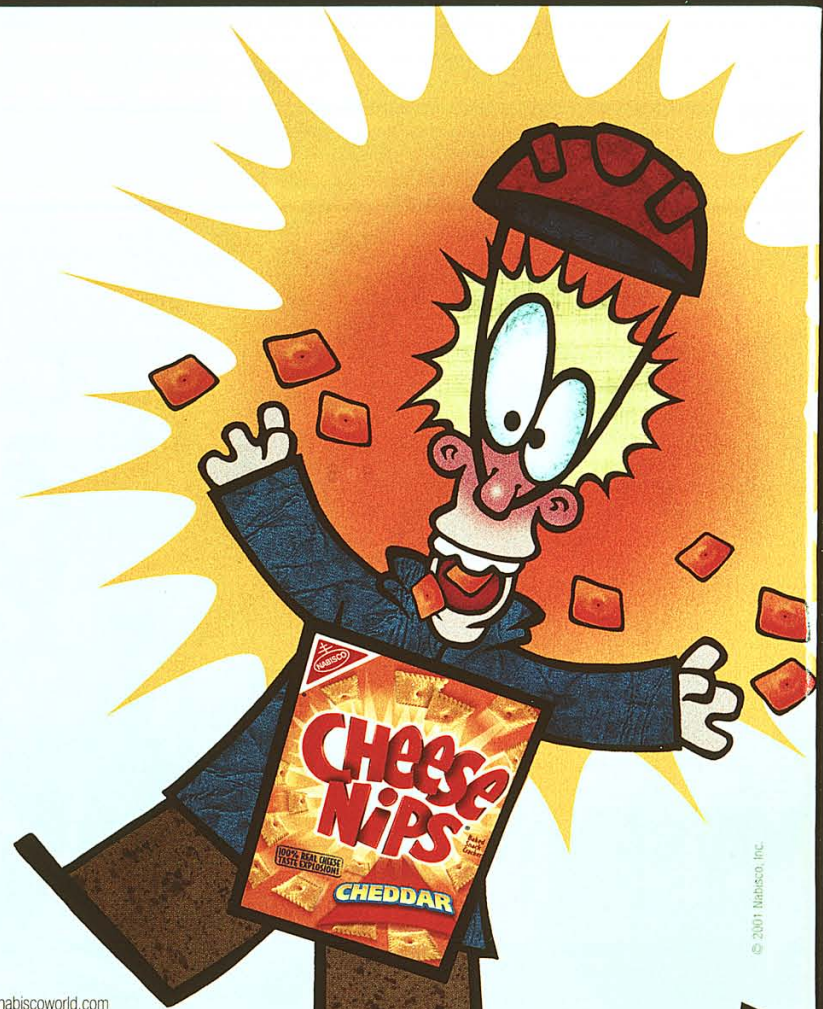
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"THE LONG,  
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